

Timber Rattlesnake *State Endangered Species* - **VENOMOUS**
(*Crotalus horridus*) - **Pl.20**

Identification: 35" - 74 1/2". This is the only rattlesnake in New Jersey and in most of the Northeastern United States. It is a large, heavy-bodied snake, with a strongly triangular head and the characteristic rattle at the end of the tail. There are two color variations in New Jersey: (1) yellow variation: ground color is yellow or brown, with black or dark brown V-shaped crossbands; the crossbands may be blotchy and incomplete towards the front and V-shaped further down the back; (2) black (melanistic) variation: pattern is similar to yellow variation, but black or dark brown pigment obscures much of the pattern. Some Timber Rattlesnakes may be completely black. In both variations, the head is unmarked and the tail is black. Scales are keeled; anal plate is single.

Where to find them: Two distinct populations and habitat requirements in New Jersey, unrelated to the color variations. In northern New Jersey, the Timber Rattlesnake is found in rocky, wooded ledges where it dens in south-facing slopes. In the Pine Barrens, the rattlesnake has scattered populations in the swamps and pine-oak forests, where it dens along riverbeds.

When to find them: Active May through October.

Range: Southern Region: inland Atlantic and Ocean Counties, southern Burlington, eastern Gloucester, and northeastern Cumberland Counties. Northern Region: western Passaic, northern Morris, western Warren and Sussex Counties.

Conservation Status: Habitat loss, illegal collecting, road-side mortality, and unjustified killing are all factors that have contributed to declines in rattlesnake numbers in New Jersey. Once found throughout the state, rattlesnakes are now restricted to portions of the northern region and the Pinelands.

WARNING: Do NOT attempt to handle this snake!

Timber Rattlesnake - VENOMOUS!

(Crotalus horridus) - text pg. 29

Yellow phase



Facial pit & vertical pupil



Intermediate phase



Shovel-shaped head



Key Features

- Three color variations: yellow (light) phase, intermediate phase, & black (dark) phase.
- Yellow phase: black or brown crossbands on a yellow ground color.
- Intermediate phase: black blotches and crossbands on a background of light gray and white.
- Black phase (not pictured): crossbands and background are both black making it difficult to discern pattern.
- Rattle at end of tail.
- Shovel-shaped head.
- Facial pit and vertical pupil.
- Scales keeled.

Rattle



State Endangered